

To whom it may concern:

I am writing as a voter and tax paying constituent to express extreme opposition and concern regarding HB 6283. There are multiple issues with this bill that threaten consumer choice and adult access to low risk vapor products, otherwise known as e-cigarettes. This bill represents a dramatic overreach. If this bill were to become law, thousands of former smokers in Connecticut would be pressured to return to smoking or acquire products from out-of-state retailers. In the same regard, it is a certainty that this bill would force all of Connecticut's independent vapor retail shops to lay off their employees and close their doors.

By including e-cigarettes in the state's definition of "tobacco products" this bill would be subjecting vapor products to regulation that is inappropriate for the category and confusing to consumers. I am also concerned that this change will subject vapor products to the state's 50% wholesale tax on tobacco products. In which case, it must be made clear that additional taxes on these products beyond state sales tax is predatory and unjustifiable due to their remarkably low risk profile.

This bill would also prohibit the sale of flavored e-cigarettes. As worded in this proposal, not even traditional tobacco or menthol flavors would be allowed. This is extreme. Over the past 14 months, two large-scale surveys of adult consumers of vapor products have been released -- one published in a respiratory health medical journal (<http://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/10/12/7272>) and the other on the web (<http://vaping.com/data/big-survey-2014-initial-findings-eliquld>). ; Both surveys found that flavors are extremely important in helping smokers distance themselves from the the taste and smell of burning tobacco smoke, which we know is one of the most difficult parts of quitting smoking. As a result, 425,000+ Connecticut smokers will actually be discouraged from quitting by switching to a product that is estimated to be 99% less hazardous than smoking. In the end, the Connecticut Government will be left carrying the tab for the disease and death caused by smoking, which kills over 400,000 people each year.

HB 6283 also proposes to enact advertising and marketing restrictions on e-cigarettes identical to rules governing tobacco products advertising. Whereas the justification for restricting cigarette advertising is based on the death and disease caused by smoking, vapor products do not pose similar risks. In fact, as with other provisions of this bill, the case can be made that limiting adult awareness of vapor products is actually a form of harm in and of itself.

Moreover, this bill would subject vapor products to warning label requirements, again, based on the harm caused by other products that has not been shown to exist in e-cigarettes. Other labeling requirements requiring manufacturers to disclose the source of ingredients are clearly beyond what is required of the harmful products e-cigarettes are being compared to and seem to be intended to create barriers to out of state manufacturers selling their products in Connecticut. Labeling requirements are best implemented at the federal level so as to not create barriers to interstate trade.

Overall, HB 6283 is overloaded with provisions that are clearly designed to deny adult consumers in Connecticut basic access to safer alternatives to smoking. I, along with my fellow members of the Consumer Advocates for Smoke-free Alternatives Association (CASAA) thank you for considering my comments and urge you to oppose this bill. Please keep me informed of the progress of this bill and feel free to contact me with any questions you may have. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Carin Oppelt